

Feel the rhythm! Feel the rhyme! Get on up, its bobsled time!

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

OMG! I touched a C5! ...with my very own actual naked hand! Like, total nerdbolism dude! (that's similar to an *embolism*, but...)

I got the impression the curator of Flambards museum in Cornwall wasn't overly enamoured with me trying to take it for a spin, otherwise I'd have written an entire tear-down road test analysis, as you do.

This was Clive Sinclair's ill-fated and even more ill-advised foray into the realm of personal transportation. Waiting around for enough time to pass for one to mock it with the benefit of hindsight wasn't necessary as it was clearly doomed from the outset. There simply weren't enough lunatics about who were comfortable spending £400 for the

privilege of sitting in a smogfested traffic jam, staring down the barrel of an HGV's exhaust pipe to make it the runaway success Clive dreamed of.

The "electrically assisted pedal cycle" was marketed as the economical choice for the dapper gentleman commuter, what with Clive being yearningly preoccupied with serious business applications. The Speccy, remember, only serendipitously became one of the leading 8-bit gaming platforms of the '80s much to the chagrin of its inventor, who would have much preferred the dead flesh keyed device to have found its niche solely in the corporate domain.

While cheaper than all but a rusty banger of an authentic auto-mobile, an average pedal bike would have been a better buy. That's *before* you factor in the essential 'accessories' you'd need to purchase to make the C5 complete; mud flaps, wing mirrors, indicator lights, a horn, and a weatherproofing cover.

The quandary with riding so close to the ground in an open-top, polypropylene toboggan is that on a wet day you'd arrive at your destination dishevelled, splattered with mud and hedgehog juice. Combine this with the typical British winter, congested roads, a meagre range of 20 miles and maximum speed of 15mph, and the prospect looks about as enticing as playing a text adventure game on a Commodore GS. Not even the space-aged chassis designed by Lotus Cars could redeem this power-challenged 250w turkey.

The C5 may well have been capable of better performance, however, was artificially restricted so as to comply with electric vehicle legislation. By shoehorning his baby into such a limited specification, Clive was able to market it as not requiring road tax, insurance, a helmet or a driving license, making it a low-cost alternative to a car or moped.

And a dream come true for delinquent Bart Simpson wannabes.

What Clive hadn't factored in was that people are rarely driven to make purchasing decisions by way of cold, hard, logical reasoning alone. Shockingly, a larger proportion of his target clientele aspired to be Ayrton Senna rather than Noddy in Toyland.

If you're familiar with Sir Clive you'll know that he was always right ...about everything ...all the time, and anyone who dared to question his judgement risked playing dodge with an airborne rotary phone. So of course without conducting any market research whatsoever (to establish if there *was* a market!), production steamed ahead regardless and the Sinclair C5 was an abysmal flop.

Launched in January 1985, only 5000 of the 14,000 units produced were actually sold, and by August the same year, the moulds had been mothballed indefinitely following a spate of unflattering reviews and manufacturing delays. Putting the cavernous chasm between expectation and actual sales into perspective, the original projection was to shift up to 500,000 units per year.

Clive surmised that recruiting the veteran former DeLorean employee, Barry Wills, to head his transport division would make the C5 hover off the shelves. Sadly, in reality, the public weren't ready for the time warp that rolled off the production line. It appears that like Biff, they too hated manure. With a topless vehicle you can take that whichever way you like.

Any hopes that a dazzling product launch might be sufficient to stoke a phoenix from the ashes were dashed when - due to time pressures - the event had to be

scheduled during the height of British winter, and the demonstrations were plagued by headline-grabbing technical failures.

Sinclair Vehicles filing for bankruptcy didn't help matters much either; losing your £8.3m capital injection would be a terribly inconvenient setback for *any* company! Much like the C5 itself, it proved to be irreversible.

Ironically, having lost an astronomical fortune to the misguided venture, Clive sold the remaining stock to Liverpool based, Ellar (Surplus Goods) Ltd, for £75 apiece and it was remarketed as a novelty, rich kid's toy. This wasn't much of a stretch given that the manacled performance meant it could be driven by anyone over the age of 14. In this 'frivolous' capacity it enjoyed a degree of success, which must have made the pill doubly bitter to swallow for strait-laced Clive.

Ellar's director, Maurice Levensohn, sold 7000 C5s at a drastically inflated price of £700 each, confirming that the product's muddled marketing campaign was the likely culprit behind its initial failure to find an appreciative audience.

Before now I'd only ever seen *one* of these in the flesh. That was around 1986 when the local gangster family bought one for their darling little son, and he proceeded to charge the kids in the neighbourhood £5 each to have a go. I thought this was extortionate so declined the offer, and that explains how I came to wake up one morning with a horse's head on my pillow, lumbered with a permanent 'Chelsea smile' and a series of missing appendages.

Owing to the C5's iconic, out of its time aesthetics and limited availability, it has since developed a cult status

among enthusiasts around the globe.

Spectating the eBay auctions is akin to watching a shark pool feeding frenzy. Dilapidated restoration project models can sell for a few hundred pounds, while BNIB varieties can fetch a couple of *thousand* pounds.

On 1st of September, an unopened C5 hailing from Grittleton in Wiltshire sold for £2250 (plus £60 delivery fee), ending after 15 bids.

Another 'brand new in box' sale ended on 28th of September after 16 bids, reaching a final value fee of £1121.69. This was a collection-only auction which would explain the 'dwarfed' price tag - I could have snagged it myself, I'm only about 10 miles from Stockport!

Sales of second-hand models over the last two months have clocked in between £180 and £750. This includes a custom, modified vehicle that sold for £260.51 and looked like a squished up, black Batmobile complete with bubble-style cockpit enclosure.

Unsurprisingly C5 hacking is a major talking point amongst enthusiasts. Some owners alter the chassis to parody their favourite vehicle, install monster wheels, or simply add mod-con accessories, whilst the most adventurous fan has really gone the extra mile by replacing the feeble motor with a souped-up 'pancake' model to reach breakneck speeds of up to 150mph!

As with all popular retro-collecting hobbies, the best time to get in on the action is about two decades ago. Now which billboard did I hide that DeLorean behind?

I never did get to pilot one of Clive's urban toboggans, and the gangster's son who scarred me for life is now banged up

in the maximum-security Dathomir Imperial Prison. His C5 still visits him a couple of times a year if he behaves himself.